

PARLIAMENTARY DIGEST

HOUSE OF LORDS.

Tuesday, Feb. 15.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE.

The royal assent was given in the usual form to the Appropriation Act Amendment Bill. The commissioners were, the lord chancellor, the lord president (Warrington), and the Earl of Shaftesbury.

The Earl of Radnor moved for copies of the correspondence between the government and the distressed workmen of Spitalfields and Paisley, and also for the copy of a letter from the lords of the treasury, signed "George Clerk," stating that their lordships had sanctioned the decision of the board of trade, that preserved tulle should be admitted at the same rate of duty as live tulle, which, if he was correctly informed, was no duty at all.

The Earl of Ripon asserted that live tulle did pay a duty.

The Earl of Radnor repeated the fact that tulle paid no duty, and adverted to a refusal to permit certain quantities of foreign corn under bond to be liberated duty free, for the benefit of the starving men of Paisley. He must own he should have preferred to see the discretion of government exercised in granting the prayer of that memorial, than in acceding to those which related to preserved tulle.

The Earl of Ripon said he had no objection to the production of the very curious correspondence to which the noble earl had referred. He had, if he recollected rightly, seen somewhere mention made of the subject on which the noble earl had been so facetious.

The Earl of Ripon said he did not see it.

The Earl of Ripon: Then all I can say is that great wish. When I read it I thought that I should hear of the subject again before the session was over. The papers were ordered, and the house adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE.

Captain Wemyss, Captain Ducombe, and Lord Jocelyn, took the oaths and their seats.

Petitions were presented in favour of total repeal of the corn laws.

Colonel Fox begged to ask if the right hon. baronet had received any intimation of the movements of Cabrera, and connected therewith of a projected insurrection in Spain? Sir R. Peel said he had received nothing to that effect, but he had received nothing in the shape of an official communication upon the subject. He expressed an earnest hope that the government of Spain, resting as it did on the good wishes of the bulk of the Spanish people, would resist any machinations directed against it.

The Lord Advocate entered into an explanation with respect to his contradiction of the statements of Mr. Fox Maule, respecting the late lord president of the Court of Session. The learned lord wrote down immediately to Scotland to the Lord Justice Clerk, who, upon consulting with the solicitor-general, had been able to state the contents of the lord advocate's statement of the lord advocate.

CORN LAWS.

The adjourned debate on the Corn Laws was then resumed. The speakers were Captain Hamilton, Mr. Childers, Mr. Rous, Mr. Ormsby Gore, Sir E. Knatchbull, and Sir James Graham in favour of the proposed alteration, and Sir William Clay, Mr. Williams, Mr. Ward, and Mr. Labouchere against it. Debate adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Wednesday, February 16.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE.

A number of petitions were presented in favour of total repeal of the corn laws.

Sir James Graham, in reply to Mr. Erskine, moved for copies of the Bill, introduced the intentions of government to introduce a measure to facilitate the recovery of small debts.

Mr. Thesiger called the attention of the house to the circumstances attending the petition against the return for the last Belfast election. The Earl of Belfast, who was one of the defeated candidates at that election, had petitioned against the return. He had since then, however, been raised to the peerage as Lord Enniskillen, and it was, therefore, contrary to the privileges of the house that a peer should persevere in an election petition.

As there had not been a sufficient time afforded for the consideration of the question, its further consideration was postponed until Friday.

CORN LAWS.

The speakers in the adjourned debate were Mr. Buller, Mr. Bernal, and Mr. Roebuck, in favour of the amendment, and Sir W. James, the hon. Mr. Scott, Mr. Hastie, Mr. Christmas, Lord Sandon, and Lord Worsley, supported the government. The debate on the amendment was concluded by Sir R. Peel and Lord Palmerston, whose speeches we give an abstract.

Sir Robert Peel, recollecting how Lord John Russell had been wont, in government, to call on the opposition for a precise statement of their own plans, had expected some such precise declaration from Lord John Russell, but the noble lord moved only an abstract resolution, under which, however, the project of a fixed duty lurked; and it was difficult to understand how that resolution could be supported by the enemies of all duty. Lord John should have acted on his old precedent of 1833, and moved that no settlement could be satisfactory which did not involve a fixed duty; but probably there could be no renewal of the "compact alliance" upon that. He agreed that the object should be the welfare of the whole people; and he had adopted his present measure, because he thought it better for the whole people's welfare than a fixed duty. Lord John had seemed to be quitting the fixed for the sliding duty, but made his slide all at once, and dropped it in the duty on a rise of 2s. in the price. Here was an inducement to the speculator to hold back corn for a rise! Sir R. Peel then pointed out some of the discrepancies of his opponents; for instance, Mr. Childers had said the new mode of taking the averages would raise prices by no less than 5s.; Lord Worsley contended that it would not raise them at all. Between opinions in opposite extremes, he hoped and believed he had chosen a just medium, which moderate men of all classes would be willing to adopt. He (Sir Robert Peel) was not desirous of winning a little popularity by enacting showy principles, at the expense of neglecting practical improvements. How many thousands of families were there, whose very existence depended on a cautious procedure, in reference to a law so long extended, and involving so many elements of uncertainty? To raise a sense of injustice among these great multitudes

would be to excite the worst prejudice against your own principles of free trade. The true object was to exchange a system of prohibition for a system of protection. Every duty, however, would, under some circumstances, be a prohibition. American corn, the noble lord said, would cost 47s.; whereas, when prices in England were at 50s., even a fixed duty of 8s. would be a prohibition upon American corn. Sir R. Peel then entered a detailed analysis of the operation of his scale at various points. He admitted that the country could not be made absolutely independent of foreign grain, but he would have her importation supplemental only, and not substantial and primary. For, if importation took place to such an extent as to supersede home-grown corn, the day might come when, from deficient harvests or other causes, they might have bitter experience of the imprudence of discouraging agriculture at home. He compared his own scale with those which had preceded it, and showed in detail its advantage over them all. Yet some of his opponents said it was a return to the old law. He would not consent to old law stand. He would not consent to let that which grievance. Lord John said, it was a duty, but the noble lord's own allies would not suffer such a duty to be permanent; and Lord John himself, citing Lord Bacon, had affirmed the inexpediency of any change except such as would carry a certain advantage to the country. A party sense it might have been better to let the law alone. But ministers had other and higher views. They had not conferred before with their supporters. They expected some disaffection in some quarters, but they looked to find their ultimate result in the approval of moderate men, and the support of all classes in the country.

Lord Palmerston, at the close of the last session of parliament, had expressed his apprehension that the present change of the government would find in giving satisfaction, and the result justified his apprehensions. Sir Robert Peel had himself admitted that, in substance, the change which the first attempt of it had been received by the supporters of the government, was its condemnation—"damned it, damnt."—Ministers had not taken the course of gratifying either party. A more liberal measure might not have received support from one quarter, but it would have been supported from another. The other quarters, and such a course would have been ultimately better for the government as well as the country. Still he was aware that the measure would be carried; a silence gives consent. He was favourable to a fixed duty; not, however, for the sake of protection to agriculture, for he objected to all protection. The country was not called on to insure other producers against the contingencies of their callings. His view of a duty was, that it should be raised for revenue alone. Sir R. Peel had stated no reasons for making such a change as this, unless it was that agriculture had actually more protection than it could make use of. The fixed duty would have been better for the interests of our exports, better for the regularity of the supply, better for the employment of British shipping. But a sliding scale, modify it as you will, would neither benefit commerce nor the revenue; while, under a fixed duty, the trade in corn would become a steady and expansive trade. It was idle to talk about independence of foreigners in a country where some millions of people exist but by foreign commerce. Ireland had been a corn-exporting country, and yet her poor had starved because they had not the means of purchasing the very corn they raised. Why was the trade divided into zones, each having productions peculiar to itself, while the wants of almost all nations were the same? It was in order that man should be dependent on man—that commerce might make him happier, wiser, and better. Then came the presumptuous folly of the dealers in protection attempting to substitute the puny shades of their own legislation for the great and beneficial laws of nature. Whatever the issue of this debate, he looked forward, at no distant period, to the maturity of better principles and better results.

The house then proceeded to a division, when the numbers were:—
For the original motion... 349
For the amendment... 226
Majority... 123

An attempt was then made to force on the committee on Thursday evening, which was resisted by Mr. Villiers, and ultimately Sir Robert Peel consented to adjourn the question, and the house to Friday. The house then broke up at half past two.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

Thursday, February 17.

THEIR LORDSHIPS MET AT THE USUAL HOUR.

The Marquis of Conyngham presented a petition from Donegal on the subject of the Irish Dissenters' Marriage Act.

The Earl of Minto presented several petitions from the dissenting churches and other places, against the provision laws.

On the motion of the Duke of Richmond, the usual sessional Library Committee was appointed.

Lord Brougham presented petitions for a repeal of the corn laws.

Lord Clarendon presented certain returns of the slave-trade, and expressed his great regret that the French ratification had not been exchanged, nor could he state any precise time at which it might be expected. The treaty, which was still left open for the adhesion of France, was binding on the other four powers, and had to observe that the treaty of 1831 and 1833, to which France was a party, were still in full force. By that of 1831, the mutual right of search was guaranteed; and by that of 1833, the equipment of slavers was considered as *prima facie* evidence of their occupation, and afforded sufficient ground for capture. There was a difference between these treaties and the new one, that the latter gave a more extensive latitude in which to exercise the right of search. It was impossible to conceive that the causes could long prevail which had prevented the King of the French from ratifying the treaty; and he therefore, hoped that ere long the whole force would be united in the great object which they had in view.

Lord Cottanham presented bills for the establishment of local courts, which, however, he said he should abandon, if satisfactory measures on the same subject were introduced by government.—Their lordships then adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Monday, February 21.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE.

Mr. Jackson (Solicitor-General for Ireland) took the oaths and his seat for the Dublin University.

A great many petitions were presented, chiefly on the subject of the corn laws; after which

Sir G. Cockburn, in reply to Captain Berkeley, stated that Mr. Elliot's speech in the House of Commons, in reference to the repeal of the corn laws, had been a most able and judicious one, and did not result from any doubts entertained of the justice of his sentence.

Sir R. Peel laid on the table of the house the slave-trade treaty, to which he referred in terms to those used by Lord Aberdeen in the House of Lords.

Viscount Palmerston hoped that the French government would not refuse to ratify a treaty which had been signed by their ambassador in this country, in con-

sequence of speculations of which the cabinet at Paris were cognizant.

Sir R. Peel then, in reply to Mr. P. Sturt, said, that he could not state the plans of the government as to the duties on foreign produce until the house went into committee of ways and means.

In answer to Mr. T. Duncombe, Sir J. Graham stated, that the Poor-law Amendment Act, with all the modifications which government intended to introduce, would be brought forward after Easter.

Mr. Cobden asked Sir R. Peel, if the government were prepared to lay on the table of the house a particular specification of the peculiar burdens of taxation borne by the landed interest. Sir R. Peel was not prepared to do so. It was matter of controversy as to what constituted a peculiar burden.

CORN LAWS.

The House then went into committee on the Corn Laws; Mr. Hardy, Mr. Lindsay, Mr. Smythe, Mr. S. Wortley, Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Hope, and Mr. Milnes, supported Sir R. Peel's proposition, and Mr. Macaulay, Mr. C. Buller, Mr. Rice, and Mr. Munst, opposed it. The debate was again adjourned.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

(Tuesday, February 22.)

No other business was done than the presentation of petitions, with the exception of a notice by the Bishop of Exeter, respecting a poor law union.—Adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE.

Sir C. Lemon and Viscount Bunsard took the oaths and their seats, as members for the western division of Cornwall and the borough of Bandon.

Many petitions were presented, and the private bills on the table were forwarded in their respective stages.

In reply to a question from Mr. Labouchere, Mr. Gladstone stated, that nothing could be further from the intention of government than to leave the differential duties imposed on foreign commodities imported into the colonies liable to be neutralized by the colonial legislatures. It was the intention of the Government, that the protection of seven per cent, or whatever other protection might be given, should be a *bona fide* and real protection for British goods.

In reply to a question from Mr. Hindley, whether the British government had lately received any communication from the great northern powers as to the policy of recognizing what he thought fit to call the constitutional government of Spain. Sir Robert Peel said, that our anxious wish was to see Spain a prosperous and perfectly independent nation—indeed, of all that we could wish for her, we wished her to be so. It was not our desire to see her a vassal state, but we desired certainly to give strength and stability, by our counsel and influence, to the present government of Spain, because we see under that government the progress of civilization and prosperity, and we certainly have exercised such influence as we could command, for the purpose of inducing the governments of continental Europe to recognize the government of Spain. It is, of course, impossible for me to state at length the desired recognition may take place.

A discussion then ensued on the application of members for leave of absence, in which the peculiar position of such members as are practising barristers was adverted to. The disposition of the house seemed to be to afford every possible facility to encourage barristers to become members of parliament.

In reply to a question from Sir E. Buller, Sir R. Peel stated his perfect readiness to proceed with his own corn-law plan, and hoped the house would consider the necessity of bringing the present protected duties on an equal and early basis.

Mr. Murphy called the attention of the house to the detention and imprisonment of certain British subjects by the authorities of Central America, and moved for copies of the correspondence and dispatches, if any, upon the subject. Lord Stanley said, that no time had been spent in a despatch explanation and reparations for such detention of British subjects, and as the matter was still the subject of negotiation, he hoped the hon. member would withdraw his motion. Mr. Murphy assented, and the motion was accordingly withdrawn.

Sir R. Peel, in reply to a question from Sir J. Russell, expressed his anxiety to lay before the house the financial measures in the contemplation of the government. It would be necessary, however, to take some of the estimates in committee of supply prior to going into a committee of ways and means; and, before doing this, he would have to state the reasons for the sense of the house upon the corn law he proposed for its adoption. If that opinion should be decisively in its favour he believed the opinion would be general in that house, as it was certainly a considerable relaxation of the existing law, the sooner it received the sanction of parliament the better. He should, however, lose no time unnecessarily in laying his financial views before the house.

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The debate on the corn laws was resumed in committee.

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On the motion of the Duke of Richmond, the usual sessional Library Committee was appointed.

Lord Brougham presented petitions for a repeal of the corn laws.

Lord Clarendon presented certain returns of the slave-trade, and expressed his great regret that the French ratification had not been exchanged, nor could he state any precise time at which it might be expected. The treaty, which was still left open for the adhesion of France, was binding on the other four powers, and had to observe that the treaty of 1831 and 1833, to which France was a party, were still in full force. By that of 1831, the mutual right of search was guaranteed; and by that of 1833, the equipment of slavers was considered as *prima facie* evidence of their occupation, and afforded sufficient ground for capture. There was a difference between these treaties and the new one, that the latter gave a more extensive latitude in which to exercise the right of search. It was impossible to conceive that the causes could long prevail which had prevented the King of the French from ratifying the treaty; and he therefore, hoped that ere long the whole force would be united in the great object which they had in view.

Lord Cottanham presented bills for the establishment of local courts, which, however, he said he should abandon, if satisfactory measures on the same subject were introduced by government.—Their lordships then adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Monday, February 21.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE.

Mr. Jackson (Solicitor-General for Ireland) took the oaths and his seat for the Dublin University.

A great many petitions were presented, chiefly on the subject of the corn laws; after which

Sir G. Cockburn, in reply to Captain Berkeley, stated that Mr. Elliot's speech in the House of Commons, in reference to the repeal of the corn laws, had been a most able and judicious one, and did not result from any doubts entertained of the justice of his sentence.

Sir R. Peel laid on the table of the house the slave-trade treaty, to which he referred in terms to those used by Lord Aberdeen in the House of Lords.

Viscount Palmerston hoped that the French government would not refuse to ratify a treaty which had been signed by their ambassador in this country, in con-

sequence of speculations of which the cabinet at Paris were cognizant.

Sir R. Peel then, in reply to Mr. P. Sturt, said, that he could not state the plans of the government as to the duties on foreign produce until the house went into committee of ways and means.

In answer to Mr. T. Duncombe, Sir J. Graham stated, that the Poor-law Amendment Act, with all the modifications which government intended to introduce, would be brought forward after Easter.

Mr. Cobden asked Sir R. Peel, if the government were prepared to lay on the table of the house a particular specification of the peculiar burdens of taxation borne by the landed interest. Sir R. Peel